

Planes, Trains and Automobiles

How Important is Transportation?

This question is stated as one of those questions whose answer is so obvious, it needn't be answered. It's just a way of emphasizing the obvious.

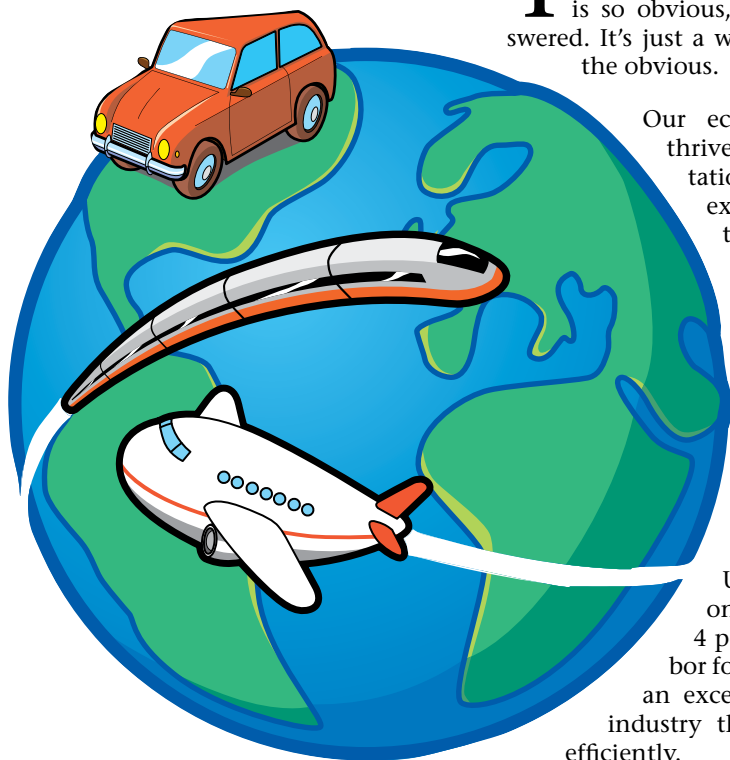
Our economy not only thrives on its transportation system, but is excessively sensitive to it. Just look at the impact of higher fuel prices. Moving people, goods, and even information is an essential part of our world. The interesting thing is that for its enormous importance to the Utah economy, it only employs about 4 percent of Utah's labor force. Obviously, it is an exceedingly important industry that operates quite efficiently.

When identifying industries, transportation carries its own classification. It includes air travel, trucking, railroads,

buses, taxis, ports, and boats, although the latter two don't have much presence in Utah. You might be surprised to find that it also includes other transportation modes. Would you have guessed that petroleum pipelines are classified in transportation? How about courier services like UPS or FedEx?

There are around 50,700 people employed directly in what we call the transportation industry. The biggest subset is trucking, whether short- or long-haul, and it keeps over 18,000 workers busy. Air travel, especially with the presence of Delta employing Salt Lake City as its western hub, elevates Utah noticeably. It gives it an advantage in a transportation-addicted world, as many cities are just a flight away. Delta's expanding international reach should only help Utah more. Over 7,000 workers keep Utah's air systems moving.

These are some of the immediate influences of the transportation sector. The expansive part is its secondary effects. Think of all the tourists who come to Utah because of advanced transportation. Many come from different parts of the world. Think about all the roads, rails, and runways built. Think about

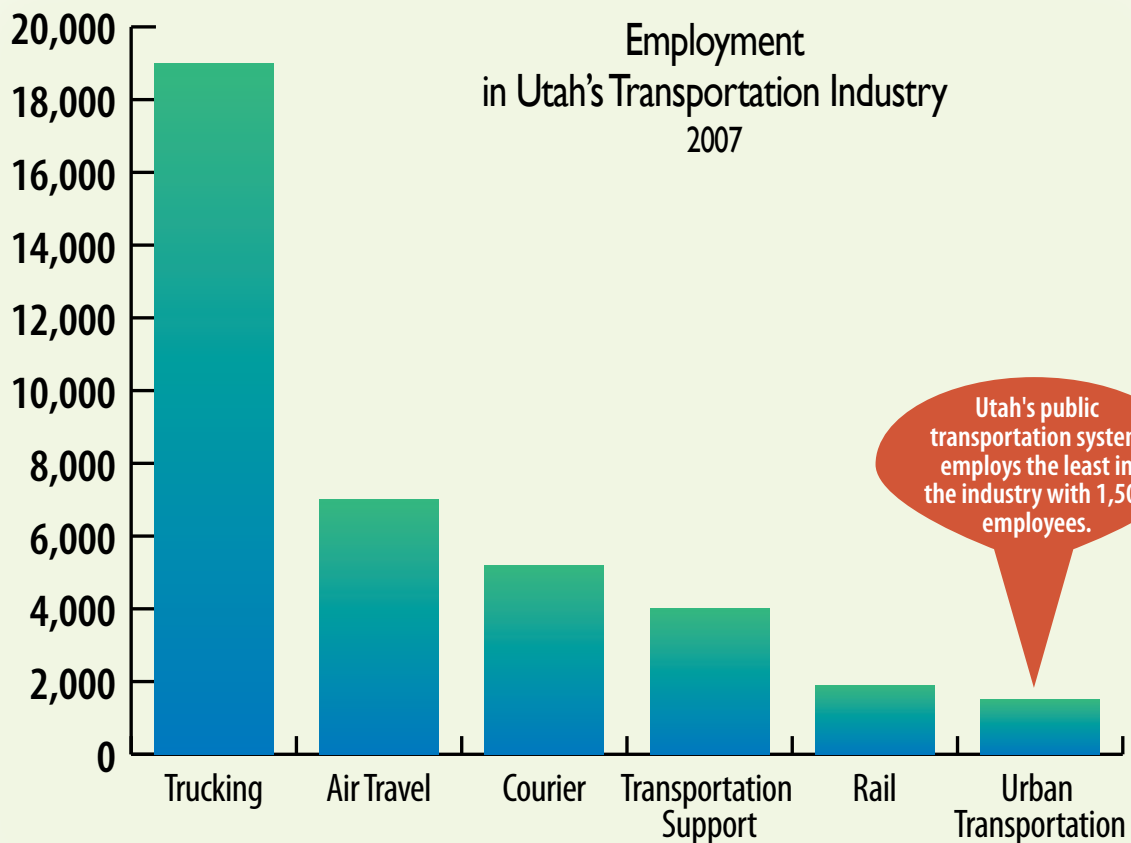


In Utah, there are around 50,700 people employed directly in the transportation industry.

your need to get to work and back, and how much you spend buying, feeding, and maintaining your car. Even teens are as happy as can be driving around in a junker. Transportation has become so important to our modern world that “ease of movement” is being considered as an addition to the Bill of Rights. I’m just

kidding, but it may as well be. The centrality of transportation and its main fuel oil lies at the heart of some of the world’s trouble spots. The disruption of oil flow and its availability is currently the world’s most volatile geopolitical issue. The world would probably be apathetic to what happens with the internal politics of Ni-

geria if that country weren’t a major producer of oil—probably Venezuela as well. Would the rest of the world be so sensitive to issues in the Middle East if oil wasn’t so pervasive there? Transportation, and the need for cheap transportation, have become a driving force of the world today. ⓘ



Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services